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Final
Session
Report



Working for the people and
communities of the 32nd District

Rep. Maralyn Chase
Final Session Report

Dear Neighbors,

I promised in January that I would be a voice for our communities in the Legislature. I'm happy to report that we were heard! We made great progress this year on:

- Improving state support for schools;
- Helping small businesses;
- Improving access to quality health care and long-term care;
- Promoting energy freedom and protecting our environment.

We did all this—and more—within a prudent budget that saved more than \$940 million for future needs.

I hope you'll take a moment to read about great successes for our state and local communities in the 2006 session.

Please also remember I serve you 12 months a year, not only when the Legislature is in session. So please don't hesitate to write or call if I can help you in any way, or if you'd just like to share your thoughts and concerns. Serving you is why I'm here, and listening to you helps me to be a stronger voice for you.

Warmly,

Maralyn Chase

Maralyn

Working to Improve Education

Parents and teachers asked me to emphasize three education priorities this year: (1) improve state funding for schools; (2) provide more assistance and flexibility to help students succeed on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL); and (3) ensure the state pays more of its fair share of the costs of educating children with disabilities. We achieved all three goals!

- For the second straight year, we fully funded the people's education initiatives. In 2005-06 as a whole, state school funding improved by an average of \$1,234 per student--\$1490 per student if you include new investments in school construction.
- We targeted more than \$40 million to help students struggling with the WASL and created alternative paths to graduation that were requested by teachers, parents and the Superintendent of Public Instruction.
- We secured \$3 million to help schools educate special needs children in residential homes. This will be a big help to Shoreline schools struggling with added costs associated with Fodor Homes.



Solar Hot Water &
Renewable Energy

Energy independence, cleaner air, and more good jobs for Washington. That's why lawmakers voted 142 to 1 for my bill to exempt solar hot water systems from sales taxes.

The 32nd District is a national leader on renewable energy. Our Shoreline Solar Project and annual Shoreline Renewable Energy Fair are leading progress toward renewable energy strategies that create good jobs while cutting energy bills and pollution that fuels global warming. As a voice for the 32nd District in the state capitol, I'm working to get the state to share our values, and I'm proud we achieved this victory together.

Solar water heating is the real workhorse of renewable energy. It can slash the cost of heating water—the second biggest energy cost facing homeowners—by 40% to 80%. It also pays for itself faster than other renewable energy systems. Better still, exempting solar hot water systems from sales taxes means more businesses and families can take advantage of a temporary 30% federal tax credit on these systems.

Thank you to all the local citizens who made our victory possible. If you have an idea for a good law, please let me know. As a voice for you in Olympia, putting good ideas from citizens into state law is an important part of my job.



Gov. Chris Gregoire signs my solar water heating tax exemption into law. Standing with me are Scott Richards and Larry Owens, President of the Shoreline Solar Project, and Solar Richard.

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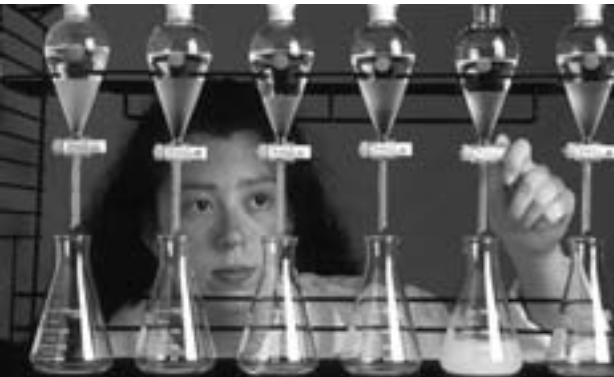


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Biofuels = More Energy Freedom

We took another great step toward energy freedom this year with a bold initiative to launch a Washington renewable fuels industry. The key was to invest in a biofuels infrastructure—"seed crushers" and refineries—that farmers need to convert crops to fuel. We also improved market access for renewable fuels and directed state agencies to replace 20 percent of their diesel with biodiesel.



As someone who knows government must work harder to make every tax dollar go farther, I'm pleased that matching requirements will double the value of our Energy Freedom investments. These investments are truly a win-win-win for Washington: They will help our farmers and rural economy, promote energy independence, and reduce carbon monoxide and other pollutants.

Saving Puget Sound and Hood Canal

Puget Sound and Hood Canal are state treasures that are closely tied to our quality of life. I'm thrilled we took action this year to ensure future generations will enjoy and reap the economic benefits of our unique marine environment.

The Legislature agreed with my call to scientifically analyze the impact of nitrogen in degrading water quality and enlarging the "Dead Zone" in Hood Canal. This scientific information is crucial to ensuring we get maximum value and impact from every dollar invested in saving Hood Canal.



Lawmakers also enacted the bill I co-sponsored to create a long-term strategy for protecting Puget Sound from leaking septic systems. We worked hard for a balanced solution to this growing threat. The fact that the Association of Washington Business and the environmental community strongly supported our strategy shows that, with good will and effort, we can unite Washington behind responsible environmental policy.

Parking Fees at Parks are History!

I said I'd work to repeal the \$5 day-use fees at state parks, and we did it. These fees had kept about nine million visitors from visiting our parks. Our healthy budget allowed us to end the fees while still providing the dollars needed to keep our parks clean and green.



Helping Small Business

We did it! Lawmakers passed my bill to help small manufacturers compete and win in the global marketplace. By giving Washington Manufacturing Services (WMS) the statutory authority it needs to pull in more federal dollars, we ensured this vital service can now help more small firms access resources and use cutting-edge "lean manufacturing" strategies to improve productivity and sales.

I worked with Republicans and Democrats to build support for WMS, which works closely with the Center for Manufacturing Excellence at Shoreline Community College. Our success will help small manufacturing firms for a long time to come. As the lead Republican on the Economic Development Committee said, my bill will be "a vital link to promoting better business practices, better salaries and prosperity for these manufacturing concerns."

Tax-relief for Small Businesses

Small businesses pleaded for an end to the automatic 5 percent penalty for late payment of taxes, no matter how unintentional. I voted to end this unfair tax, and it was repealed. We also reduced accounting headaches for many small businesses by changing tax due dates from the 20th to the 25th of the month.



Small Business Health Insurance Partnership

The Small Business Health Insurance Partnership I supported is now the law, and will soon offer premium assistance so more small businesses can provide health coverage to employees. Health costs are the top issue facing small businesses, and many companies are dropping health benefits due to costs. We needed to take action. Importantly for businesses: the partnership is not a mandate, but a choice, and it will not increase paperwork for businesses.

Performance Audits of Tax Preferences

I'm pleased lawmakers passed the law I co-sponsored to require performance audits of billions of dollars in state tax preferences. These audits will tell us which tax preferences are justified because they create good jobs and other public benefits, and which just pander to lobbyists and special interests at the expense of everyone else. This is important: When special interests pay less than their fair share of taxes, it means everyone else is paying more.

Campaign Finance Reform

I promised local citizens I would try to limit the alarming levels of special-interest campaign money pouring into Supreme Court and port races. I kept my promise. The reforms I co-sponsored are now law. For the first time, court and port races must abide by the campaign finance limits created by the people in the Fair Campaign Practices Initiative. This reform stands with the two-thirds of state voters who said: Washington elections are not for sale!

Working for Senior Citizens

As an advocate for North King and South Snohomish County senior citizens in the Legislature, I'm pleased we made good progress on some key issues affecting retirees in Washington. We made some important gains, particularly in long-term care, where we:



- Repealed (beginning in 2007) the nursing-home bed tax that has increased nursing home costs by over \$1,900 a year per bed.

- Improved funding for quality care in nursing homes, adult family homes and boarding homes. We get double the value for our investments thanks to federal matching funds.
- Ensured equity in wages and benefits for individual home care providers. Seniors and people retired due to disabilities will tell you (as they tell me) that whenever possible they prefer receiving long-term care in the dignity and comfort of their own homes.

We also made senior citizen property-tax deferral program fairer to seniors by slashing interest rates from 8% to 5%. Although there is still much work to do on issues that disproportionately impact seniors—such as prescription drug costs and property-tax relief—I feel good about this year's successes.

Breakthrough on Medical Liability Reform

People don't elect leaders to bicker over partisan politics. They want all sides to work together for the citizens and the common good. That's one reason why so many people were rightly frustrated by the bitter fight in the Legislature and general elections last year over medical liability reform.

What a difference a year makes! By listening to everyone's concerns and focusing on common ground, we achieved a comprehensive package of reforms—endorsed by all sides—that will reduce medical errors, help curb liability insurance costs, and streamline our civil justice system. The new reforms won't solve all problems, but they are a good first step. And they show that when leaders work together in a bipartisan spirit we can find solutions on even the most difficult issues facing our citizens. I proudly co-sponsored these reforms.